

News

PHOTO BY JEANNE THEISMANN/GAZETTE PACKET



Tucker Riley and his mom, Deb Riley, cross home plate during the Miracle League opening game.

A League Of Their Own

Miracle League ends inaugural season, begins drive for new field.

By JEANNE THEISMANN
GAZETTE PACKET

For the first time in his young life, 7-year-old Tucker Riley did what most kids in Alexandria take for granted — he spent the summer playing baseball. Despite being confined to a wheelchair, he was finally part of a team when the city's first Miracle League baseball season became a reality at the Lee Center.

"The Miracle League has been amazing," said Tucker's mother Deb Riley. "This has given Tucker a sense of self-esteem and a chance to be part of something."

Sponsored by the department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural activities, the inaugural Miracle League season combined the youth and adult participants from the Alexandria Therapeutic Recreation Department, which serves children and adults with disabilities and special needs.

"I am proud that Alexandria is one of the first in our area to embrace the Miracle League program and I am hopeful that we can raise the funds to get a safe, accessible field built."

— Deb Riley, mother of Miracle League participant Tucker Riley.

"Raising a child with special needs presents so many unique challenges," Riley said. "But the therapeutic recreation department sees each child as special and welcomes them with enthusiasm. I am proud that Alexandria is one of the first in our area to embrace the Miracle League program and I am hopeful that we can raise the funds to get a safe, accessible field built."

With the season concluded, work now begins in earnest to raise funds to build a Miracle Field, a synthetic turf baseball diamond designed specifically for special needs participants. The Kelley Cares Foundation kicked off the fundraising with a \$10,000 donation at the league's closing ceremony June 4.

"The Miracle League of Alexandria is committed to raising \$135,000 for the field in the next 12 months," said Miracle League coordinator Bill Rivers. "The city has pledged \$285,000 of the \$400,000 cost if we can meet our goal by May of 2012."

The Washington Nationals have
SEE LEAGUE, PAGE 10

**Some remodelers give out free pens.
We give out something more valuable. Free knowledge.**



DON'T REMODEL YOUR HOME UNTIL YOU HAVE ALL THE INFORMATION YOU NEED.

Kitchen and Bath Seminar

Considering a kitchen or bath makeover? Learn from the experts about kitchen and bath design considerations, the product selection process, latest trends, budgeting and much more.

Saturday June 16th from 10:30 am to 12:30pm

Case Design Office Bethesda, MD or Thos. Somerville Co. Falls Church, VA

Gaining Space in Your Home Seminar

Whether it's reconfiguring existing space or adding new, this seminar will address creative ways to make your home work better for you and your family.

Saturday June 25th from 10:30 am to 12:30pm

Additional Remodeling Seminar Topics

- Creative Outdoor Living • Green Home Remodeling Tips and Advice
- Enhancing Your Lower Level Living • Enhancing Your Home's Curb Appeal
- Renovating Your Condominium

A catered lunch will be provided, but hurry because space is limited, so reserve your spot today.

The seminars are FREE.
To RSVP visit CaseDesign.com/seminar
or call 703.667.7397

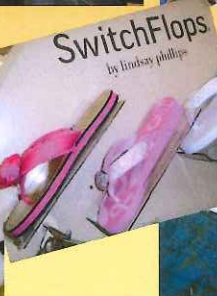
CASE
DESIGN/REMODELING, INC.

Sponsored in part by:

KOHLER

STERLING

Summer Fun Starts Here



The Shops at Bradlee

Bradlee Center

King Street, just west of
Quaker Lane in Alexandria

NEWS

A League of Their Own

FROM PAGE 5

partnered with Alexandria's Miracle League in an effort to help raise funds for the field.

"The Washington Nationals have a special website www.nationals.com/miracleleagueofalexandria where you can order tickets for any home game and part of the proceeds go to the Miracle Field," Rivers said. "They will also be hosting an 'Alexandria Sports Night' at Nationals Ball Park in September to highlight the Miracle Field effort and will help our fundraising by providing raffle items and mascot appearances at special events."

Additional donations are being sought from local businesses and private citizens, according to Don Simpson Jr., who is the fundraising chair for the league. Tax deductible donations can be made at the Miracle League of Alexandria website.

"I wish we had something like this when Brian was alive," said Miracle League committee member Laura Fries, who lost her 5-year-old special needs son Brian Schutzius in 2005. "As a parent, you ache for that one moment of 'normal' and giving these kids a chance to be part of baseball and sports gives them that. Brian would have loved this."

As the fundraising continues, the league will continue to play its games on a regular field, even though the kids will struggle to use wheelchairs or move through the dirt.

"This is my dream to play baseball!" said adult therapeutic rec participant Ellen Hawkins. "This is awesome! I love it!"

For families like the Riley's, the Miracle League and the volunteer "Angels in the Outfield" provide something special for the community.

"We live in an area teeming with opportunities for able-bodied children," Riley said. "Finally Tucker and other kids like him have something to call their own."

For more information on the Miracle League of Alexandria, visit www.miracleleagueofalexandria.com



Adult therapeutic rec participant Ellen Hawkins waves to the crowd during the Miracle League opening game.



Participants, volunteers and dignitaries, including Washington Nationals "president" Abe Lincoln, gather for a group photo prior to the start of the final game of the inaugural Miracle League season June 4 at the Lee Center.

PHOTOS BY JEANNE THEISSMAN/GAZETTE PACKET



Philip Reese heads for home plate with help from volunteer Katey Swanson.



Mimi Swanson, left, Karen Harry and Katey Swanson, mother, aunt and twin sister, respectively, of T.C. Williams graduate and longtime therapeutic rec volunteer Kelley Swanson. The Kelley Cares Foundation was founded in her memory.



Ethan Stanford prepares for his first at-bat with help from Mac Slover, left, and Brenda Holloway.



Sesi Atiase, left, and therapeutic rec staff member Hawa Belleh celebrate on Opening Day of the inaugural Miracle League season April 30.



Abram Davidson crosses home plate after his first at-bat during the Miracle League season opener.



Melinda Williams gets her first hit of the Miracle League season.



Adult therapeutic rec participants Sean Weber and Valery Davenport prior to the Miracle League season opener.



Volunteer Pat Miller, left, congratulates Valery Davenport at the close of the Miracle League season.



Ethan Stanford at bat with therapeutic rec assistant director Brenda Holloway.



Charlie Lenneman, right, gets a high-five from Youth Sports Director Mac Slover as he crosses home plate.

